



**City of Bellevue
Development Services Department
Land Use Staff Report**

Proposal Name: Clifton Larson Allen and Healthcare Management
Administrators Sign Variance

Proposal Address: 10700 Northup Way

Proposal Description: Application for a variance to the City of Bellevue Sign Code
Section 22B.040.B.4, in order to install two building mounted
signs which extend above the 20-foot height limit for building
mounted signs in the Office (O) zone.

File Number: 18-121995-LS


Applicant: Virginia Nicholson, Schwabe Williamson & Wyatt, PC

Decisions Included: Variance (Process II)

Planner: Nick Whipple, Associate Planner

**State Environmental Policy
Act Threshold
Determination:** **Exempt**

Director's Decision: **Approval with Conditions**
Michael A. Brennan, Director
Development Services Department


By: Elizabeth Stead, Land Use Director
Development Services Department

Notice of Application: August 30, 2018
Decision Publication Date: October 25, 2018
Appeal Deadline: November 8, 2018

For information on how to appeal a proposal, visit the Development Services Center at City Hall or call (425) 452-6800. Appeal of the Decision must be received in the City Clerk's Office by 5 PM on the date noted for appeal of the decision.

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Attachment: Project Plans

I. Request/Proposal Description

The applicant requests approval of an administrative variance to the City of Bellevue Sign Code to install two building mounted signs along the south façade which extend above the maximum 20-foot height limit allowed in the Office (O) zone. The purpose of the higher sign location is to obtain visibility at the street level (Northup Way and 108th Ave NE) and at the sidewalk for pedestrians.

The existing office building contains two floors of offices over basement parking which is partially above-grade on the southern façade. The Clifton Larsen Allen sign is an approximately four-foot-tall sign which will be placed above the second-floor office level at a height roughly between 30 to 34 feet. The Healthcare Management Administrators (HMA) sign will be placed above the first-floor office level at a height of approximately 20 to 24 feet. Both signs comply with the sign area limitations described in BCC 22B.10.040.B.3.

In the proposed location, the signs will provide the best visibility from both directions along 108th Ave NE and Northup Way. The proposed sign dimensions meet all requirements in the City of Bellevue Sign Code, with the exception of the location at which the signs will be placed on the building.

Figure 1 – Proposed Clifton Larson Allen sign and HMA sign on the south façade



II. Zoning, Site Context and Description

The subject property is located at the intersection of Northup Way (south) and 108th Ave NE (east) in a commercial area in the North Bellevue Subarea, approximately 180 feet north of Washington State Route 520. There is an existing Montessori school to the north, a drive-in restaurant (Burgermaster) to the west, a hotel within Kirkland city limits to the northwest, and a large condominium complex to the east of the subject site. The subject site is approximately 3.3 acres with moderate slopes from the north. The building is approximately 40 feet tall as measured from the Average Finished Grade.

Figure 2 – Aerial Photograph

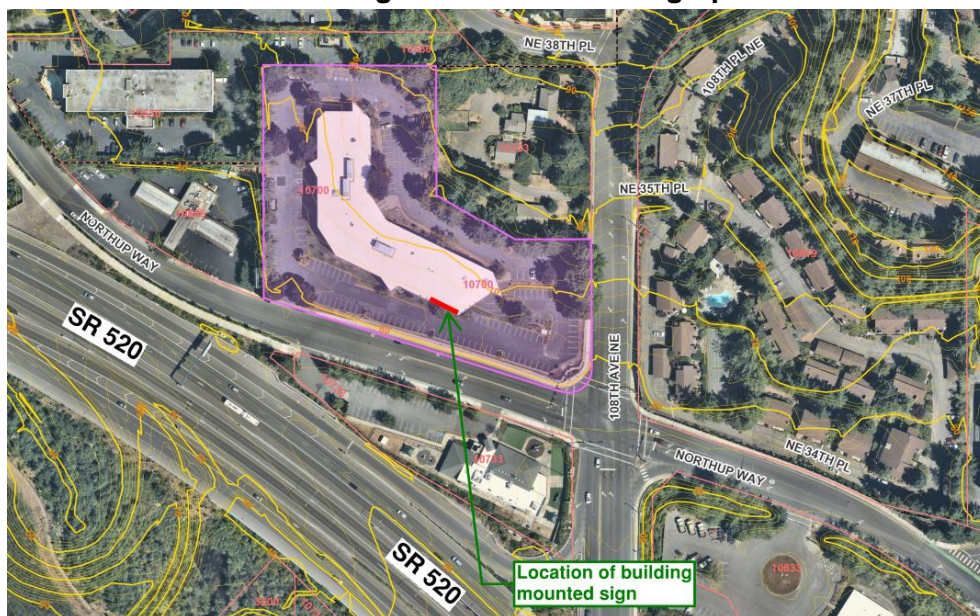
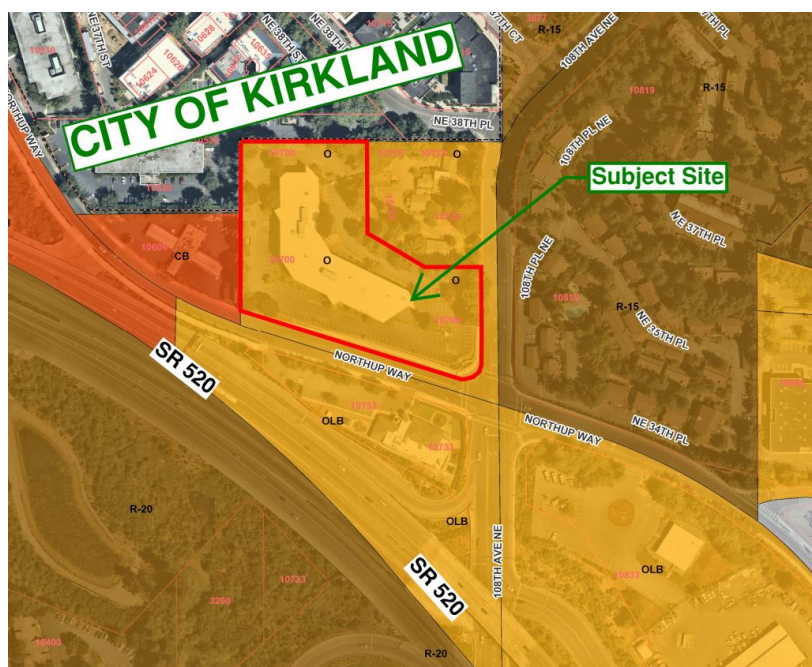


Figure 3 – Zoning Map



Legend:

- O = Office
- CB = Community Business
- R-15 = Multifamily Residential
15 Dwelling units/acre
- R-20 = Multifamily Residential
20 Dwelling units/acre

III. Public Notice and Comment

Application Date:	August 17, 2018
Public Notice (500 feet):	August 30, 2018
Minimum Comment Period:	September 13, 2018

The project was publicly noticed in the City's Weekly Permit Bulletin and Seattle Times on August 30, 2018 with notice mailed to property owners within 500 feet of the project site. No written comments were received regarding the proposal, and there are no parties of record besides the applicant.

IV. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)

There are no critical areas within or immediately adjacent to the proposal site. The installation of signage on a site which does not contain Critical Areas is exempt from SEPA review.

V. Decision Criteria

Sign Code 22B.10.180 Variance Decision Criteria / Findings and Conclusions

The Director may approve, or approve with modifications, an application for a Sign Code Variance if:

- 1. The variance will not constitute a grant of special privilege inconsistent with the limitation upon signage and uses of other properties in the same vicinity and zone.**

Finding: The variance request does not result in a grant of special privilege.

Along Northup Way and 108th Ave NE, signs for businesses are clearly visible from the street right-of-way and public sidewalks. In the case of the Clifton Larson Allen and HMA site, the building was designed to take advantage of the site's topographic changes by burying the garage below grade at the north end of the site and leaving the basement garage partially exposed at the southern façade. The entrance to the building is at the north façade, and if the signs were placed on the north façade, then a variance would not be necessary. However, the sign placement on the north façade would restrict any visibility from the adjacent streets and sidewalk. Given the site topography and the way in which the building is designed to accommodate the topography, the city would likely approve a building sign request on a similarly situated property to provide adequate visibility.

- 2. Such variance is necessary because of special circumstances, which are not the result of voluntary actions of the applicant, relating to the size, shape, topography, location or surroundings of the subject property, to provide it with signage use rights and privileges permitted to other properties in the same vicinity and zone.**

Finding: The variance to place the building mounted signs above the maximum 20-foot height limit is necessary because:

- i. Buildings on sloping sites are encouraged to minimize alterations to the natural contour of the slopes to conform to the existing topography to the greatest extent feasible. Because the building was developed to minimize topographic changes outside the building envelope, consistent with City of Bellevue performance standards, the south façade is much taller than the north façade. Given that the sign height is measured from the relative ground level in the immediate vicinity of the sign, the section of the sign code would require the signs to be placed on or below the windows of the first-level office.
- ii. Requiring the CLA and HMA signs to be placed within the first 20 feet of the building height would place the signs over the window or below the windows of the first-level office floor. The signs located at this level would not be compatible with the surrounding properties' signage. The signs placed adjacent to each other about the first-level office floor would severely limit visibility as there is an existing deciduous tree in the line of sight. Given the existing significant tree, the site topography and the way in which the building is designed to accommodate the topography, the city would likely approve a building sign request on a similarly situated property to provide adequate visibility.

3. The granting of such variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the same vicinity and zone.

Finding: The granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in the same vicinity and zone.

The proposed signage design will be perceived as a part of the building design and will enhance the overall appearance, image and design character of the building and site.

4. The variance is the minimum necessary to meet the need of the applicant.

Finding: The variance request is the minimum necessary to meet the need of the applicant. City staff reviewed the proposal and conducted a site visit. Because of the location of existing trees along the south façade, both signs may not be placed next to each other on the same level and be visible from the adjacent sidewalk and roadway. The sign variance request takes advantage of the most prominent corner of the building to achieve adequate visibility. Staff concludes that the variance is the minimum necessary to achieve reasonable visibility from the adjacent right-of-ways.

VI. Conclusion and Decision:

After conducting the various administrative reviews associated with the proposal, including applicable Sign Code consistency, City Code, and Standard compliance reviews, the Director of the Development Services Department does hereby **APPROVE** the Clifton Larson Allen (CLA) and Healthcare Management Administrators (HMA) Sign Variance **WITH CONDITIONS**.

VII. Condition of Approval:

1. Except as approved in application 18-121995-LS, all signs shall comply with the sign code requirements in BCC 22B.10.040, including the maximum number of permitted signs on-site.

Authority: Bellevue City Code 22B.10.180

Reviewer: Nick Whipple, Development Services Department